

Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County presents this reprint of a guest editorial that appeared in The Sarasota Herald Tribune.

If you would like to contribute to the arts in Sarasota please contact the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County at 941-365-5118 or [sarasotaarts.org/DonateToTheArts](http://sarasotaarts.org/DonateToTheArts)

## WHY CONTRIBUTING TO SARASOTA'S ARTS ORGANIZATIONS DOES MORE THAN YOU THINK...

In a world of finite resources and a variety of demanding human service needs—hunger, housing, healthcare—the question is often pressed whether giving to the arts is justified. National studies on philanthropy show that organizations with arts-focused missions only receive four to five percent of all charitable giving, a small portion compared to education and human services.

When held next to urgent and quantifiable services like child care or homeless programs, it's not hard to imagine why someone would opt to support the former rather than the latter.

However, contributions to Sarasota's arts organizations not only keep them alive...ticket prices pay less than half the cost of most performances...they also maintain their very high quality. For all of Sarasota's arts organizations, without additional means of funding, prices would be twice as high, further isolating those who could not afford to attend. Without contributions, arts organizations would not survive or continue to provide world-class performances. It's hard to imagine Sarasota without them.

While the transcendent effect of artistic expression can't be calculated, there are also tangible benefits to investing in the arts locally. Numerous studies illustrate a multiplier effect when dollars are put to work in artistic endeavors.

One example of this is that Sarasota's superior arts organizations attract philanthropic retirees... Our world class arts organizations attract people who have the means to retire anywhere in the world...and they choose our city. Studies have shown these same people contribute twenty times more to our human services non profit organizations...health care,

homelessness, hunger, education, etc. than they do to the arts.

Perhaps this is one reason our city is one of the most charitably inclined in the nation. This is demonstrated annually...when the Community Foundation of Sarasota, with assistance of the Patterson Foundation, raises more than \$5 million in a single day for those in our community most in need...

Furthermore the students in our schools learning to play a musical instrument, use a paintbrush, participate in an acting class, or attend one of our many professional performances will see the inherent value the arts can play in their lives, no matter what profession they ultimately end up in. Jane Chu of the National Endowment of the Arts stresses research that proves a strong connection between a student's immersion in the arts and their academic success.

Our performing arts organizations are proudly making significant strides in outreach and educational programs for local students. The Sarasota Opera provides hands-on music education to over 1,100 regional students each year. The Sarasota Ballet taught more than 2,000 students the art of movement and dance this year alone. The Sarasota Orchestra boasts a youth ensemble of 314 students, along with 10,000 others who are invited each year to witness a world-class concert first-hand. The Asolo Repertory Theatre hosted over 16,000 students this year to experience live theatre. And in their WRITE-A-PLAY program, Florida Studio Theatre inspires thousands of students

locally and around the globe to write original plays each year.

Utilizing our wealth of cultural treasures, our Community Foundations, The Patterson Foundation, the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County, and other partners have helped in this success through initiatives like Any Given Child and EdExploreSRQ. These innovative efforts provide hands-on arts experiences for students inside and outside the classroom, particularly for children from low-income families who otherwise wouldn't have these experiences. National studies have shown that when lower socioeconomic students are exposed to the arts early in their lives they are three times more likely to receive bachelor's degrees.

There's no denying the innate richness that lies within art for our own humanity. Bill Greenfield expressed this beautifully: "We take it as a matter of intuitive faith, that the arts have a value that transcends measurements that might be applied to food or shelter or medical care. There is no calculus for the value of art, but we know that a painting, a play, or a piece of music can resonate within us and our fellows in a way that connects us to our world and to one another. We've had the privilege to see many times the spirit of a broken child lifted and revitalized by the arts. This is something magical and truly spiritual.

We believe that the best in art comes from its appeal to the weakest and loneliest. Art that soars is not inherently valuable except that it invites the human spirit to soar with it. In this most beautiful of all seasons we see art as the most beautiful and hopeful of human activities."

- Harry Leopold

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